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DEPARTMENT FOR OES/IHB - LHILLESHEIM

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [SOCI](#) [SL](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADORS' WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS
(AWASH) INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 033467

¶1. Embassy Freetown is very pleased to support the proposed
"Ambassadors' Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (AWASH)
Initiative."

¶2. Sierra Leone continues to rank the lowest on the Human
Development Index and is seventh lowest on the Human Poverty Index.
About 52% of the people live on less than US\$1 per day. Life
expectancy at birth is 42. Sierra Leone records the highest child
and maternal mortality rates in the world. These and other figures
demonstrate the dire level of need in the country.

¶3. Post works with schools in many ways, such as the Ambassadors'
Girls' Scholarship program, school feeding programs, and
reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools damaged during the war.
Additionally, there are schools for the disadvantaged and physically
handicapped that could benefit from this type of proposed
intervention. Most of the schools are in remote regions of the
country and have extremely poor or no ready access to fresh clean
water, good sanitation or hygienic conditions. Girl students are
more frequently disenfranchised from educational opportunities than
boy students, often due to the inaccessibility of clean water and
adequate sanitation and hygienic conditions. Post seeks to increase
its support of the education sector, but is limited by funding cuts
in recent years.

¶4. Sierra Leone ended its civil war in 2002, a decade-long war which
destroyed the majority of the country's infrastructure, including
schools. The dire needs outpace the available resources. Therefore,
the AWASH initiative, which promises to provide at least 50%
matching funds per school, would be a valued and effective way to
leverage limited resources and address a most urgent health need -
access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene for children in
school.

Women's empowerment is a top Post priority and that empowerment
begins in educating the girl child. With Sierra Leone's placement at
the bottom of the index for educational access and accomplishments,
especially for girls, this initiative offers a promise that at least
one school can rise above the daunting challenges and become a role
model for a healthier environment and improved health behaviors.

¶5. Post can easily identify the neediest school(s). We already have
key implementing partners on the ground that have the experience and
ability to implement this program when funds are available and
welcome working with the NGO consortium to identify adequate
resources. Post is most pleased to support this important and
timely initiative and welcomes feedback on moving forward.

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